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## [I am Navy Medicine: Lt. Victoria Holzapfel](#)

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*By Lt. Victoria Holzapfel, Naval Hospital Beaufort*



Lt. Victoria Holzapfel conducts medical in-processing with recruits at MCRD Parris Island, sexual assault forensic examiner program manager, Naval Hospital Beaufort.

I'm an Arlington, Texas native applying forensic science education to help patients following sexual

assault

I've long been interested in forensic science, especially after taking a course in forensic nursing during nursing school. I didn't foresee an opportunity to study, pursue or apply it in my practice as a Navy nurse; however I was quickly proved wrong.

I was trained as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) in November 2011 and became a certified Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner – Adult/Adolescent (SANE-A®) in May 2013. I received my Master of Science in Pharmacy Degree from the University Of Florida's College Of Pharmacy, which was focused in forensic science.

My training, experience and education led me to my current role as Naval Hospital Beaufort's Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Program manager. With a team of six examiners and 13 assistants, we ensure compassionate yet objective assessment and care for patients who have been sexually assaulted, and those who are suspected of committing sexual assault.

The medical and forensic response to sexual assault is a unique and polarizing area of health care. We fully understand the sensitive and distinct needs of our patients. Through compassionate yet competent response, we assist in the readiness and wellness of our Sailors, Marines and their families even in the midst of what may have been a traumatic and life-changing experience.

As part of our team's medico-forensic response, we take a multi-disciplinary approach and collaborate with various subject matter experts-from victim advocates and sexual assault response coordinators to victims' legal counsel and Judge Advocate Generals to members of law enforcement-to provide victims of sexual assault with the support they need, when they need it.

I am so privileged to have encountered just the right people in Navy Medicine who inspired, encouraged and mentored me in this very unique area of nursing, allowing me to develop this skillset to ensure every patient receives the highest quality of care in their hour of deepest need.

Sexual assault negatively impacts our warfighting capability. While the Navy has made great progress in adopting a more proactive and comprehensive approach to tackling the problem of sexual assault, we all need to continue to change our culture surrounding this issue. We are Sailors 24/7, and our behavior must demonstrate honor, courage and commitment 24/7.

I'm Lt. Victoria Holzapfel. I am Navy Medicine.

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